



California Public Utilities Commission

505 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Terrie Prosper, 415.703.1366, news@cpuc.ca.gov

PUC TESTS INNOVATIVE IN-ROADWAY LIGHTS TO ENHANCE WARNING AT RAILROAD CROSSING NEAR CITY OF SHAFTER

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan. 12, 2005 – The California Public Utilities Commission (PUC), in cooperation with the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company and the County of Kern, is conducting a highway-railroad at-grade crossing safety project at the Poplar Avenue crossing, near the City of Shafter. The project is funded by the California Office of Traffic Safety. The objective is to determine whether illuminated flashing warning lights embedded in the roadway can enhance safety at railroad crossings.

The PUC has found that substantial numbers of collisions at railroad crossings can be attributed to motorist or pedestrian inattentiveness or disregard of railroad warning devices.

Data will be collected from the roadway embedded warning lights project, and will be analyzed to determine whether the flashing lights are effective in gaining motorists' attention and in sending a more effective message that a train is approaching and the motorist or pedestrian needs to stop.

The experimental roadway embedded flashing lights system will be tested for one-year. Pedestrians and motorists will receive their first warning 500 feet from the railroad crossing when they encounter an array of unidirectional embedded amber flashing lights installed across the lane approaching the crossing. The next warning will be from an array of unidirectional red lights installed across the roadway at the railroad crossing vehicle stop-limit. This second array of lights will be focused on the approaching traffic, will span the entire width of the road, and will emit a

flashing red light when activated. The roadway embedded lights will act in conjunction with, and as a supplemental enhancement to, the existing automatic railroad warning flashing lights.

The PUC's Consumer Protection and Safety Division is responsible for safety oversight of highway-railroad crossings in California. Its Rail Crossings Engineering staff actively seeks the use of innovative technologies to enhance safety at railroad crossings. This experiment project, funded through a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, is a cooperative effort between The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company, the County of Kern, and the Commission, and is supported by the Federal Railroad Administration, Federal Highway Administration, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and the California Traffic Control Devices Committee.

For more information on the PUC, please visit www.cpuc.ca.gov.

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